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AUTHOR Thomas, David
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ABSTRACT

Narrative study of teachers and teaching is seen as sited at the intersection of many current intellectual and professional concerns. These include not only classroom practice and professional careers, but also the Self, Experience, Memory, Identity, Autobiography, Life History, Agency, and Structure. Narrative as genre presents post-modernist problems, not least the relation of language to reality and what may count as "data" or evidence. Typical teacher narrative studies possess a narrator, an interpreter-researcher, and an over-reader. Collaborative partnerships between teacher and interpreter generate dynamic text which becomes frozen on publication. The imperative of narrative means selection and emphasis shaped by the relationship context in which the "story" is being told. Narrative and its interpretation are susceptible to transference and countertransference effects. This brings particular strains in respect of notions of validity and to relationships. It is argued that over-readers of frozen texts must treat as data that which is available to them: the interpreters' perceptions. Such interpretations are described as privileged discourses. Interpreters of teacher narratives invite over-readers to trust the evidential bases of their reflections. Teacher narrative studies are seen as fitting into the interpretive case study research approach. Two models are considered as suitable for evaluating such cases. These are the quasi-judicial method and the criterial approach to trustworthiness. The moral and ethical justification for narrative research is seen as primarily one of providing an alternative voice for the disenfranchised. (Two diagrams and 70 endnotes are included; 56 references are attached.) (Author)

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'Putting Nature to the Rack: Narrative Studies as Research.'

David Thomas. Department of Education, University of Liverpool.

Paper presented at the

Teachers' Stories of Life and Work Conference

University of Liverpool,

Department of Education,

Chester College. UK.

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Abstract

Narrative study of teachers and teaching is seen as sited at the inter-section of many current intellectual as well as professional concerns. These include not only classroom practice and professional careers but also the Self, Experience, Memory, Identity, Autobiography, Life History, Agency and Structure. Narrative as genre presents post-modernist problems not least the relation of language to reality and what may count as 'data' or evidence. Typical teacher narrative studies possess a narrator, an interpreter-researcher and an over-reader. Collaborative partnerships between teacher and interpreter generates dynamic text which becomes frozen on publication. The imperative of narrative means selection and emphasis shaped by the relationship context in which the 'story' is being told. Narrative and its interpretation is susceptible to transference and countertransference effects. This brings particular strains in respect of notions of validity and to relationships. It is argued that over-readers of frozen texts must treat as data that which is available to them: the interpreters perceptions. Such interpretations are described as privileged discourses. Interpreters of teacher narratives invite over-readers to trust the evidential bases of their reflections and generalizations. Teacher narrative studies are see as fitting into the interpretive case-study research approach. Two models are considered as suitable for evaluating such cases. These are the quasi-judicial method and the criterial approach to trustworthiness. The moral and ethical justification for narrative research is seen as primarily one of providing an alternative voice for the disenfranchised.

'...the fall of Communism can be regarded as a sign that modern thought - based on the premise that the world is objectively knowable and the knowledge so obtained can be generalized - has come to a crisis...'

Vaclav Havel.

'...the main change concerns the fact that we have ceased to understand reality through experience and conscience. Language has become the main issue...the link between knowledge and representation is being questioned. Language is not to be considered as a mental representation. As long as you remain in a representational thought mode you are subject to the threat of scepticism...because there is no possibility of knowing whether our representations correspond to reality...'

Richard Rorty

'...she understood not just theoretically but sensuously and imaginatively, that we were living with constructs of ourselves, neither false nor true but mythical and alterable...a founding feminist perception...part of the contemporary canon, whether you construct it under the aegis of post-modernism or feminism...'

Lorna Sage's appreciation of Angela Carter.

'When it comes to narrative, God knows there's enough to keep the most diverse interests busy.'

Seymour Chatman

Preamble

To be involved in the study of teachers and teaching through narrative, paradoxically, is to be both a member of an academic minority cult and at the same time addressing some of the most pressing and difficult intellectual issues of our time. Teacher's stories of life and work take us into the minutiae of classroom practices and professional activities [1],and on and into complex areas such as the Self, experience, career, identity and autobiography, history, agency and social structure.[2]

The genre of narrative draws us into the arcane universe of narratology where we have come to understand the importance of discounting the contents of a story in favour of a concern with who is telling what, to whom and why? [3] We begin to understand that meaning is not inherent in discourse nor discourse structures but in contexts: being a function of the pragmatic situation in which the discourse occurs.

Positions and perspectives like these inevitably bring us into contact with possibly the key questions of our age -those to do with language and its problematic relation with the 'real'. Reality may or may not be the invention of unimaginative people, but our understanding of the world is given by the language we have to describe it: we are spoken by our discourse. George Steiner credits Mallarme with the beginnings of modernism for his discovery that language does not simply relabel a pre-existing reality but that reality is constructed through the agency of language.

Issues surrounding narratives, discourses and realities spread into the problematic areas of truth, truth-seeking, knowledge and research as a technical and moral activity. Both positivist and interpretive approaches can be seen as meta-discourses derived from certain historical, cultural and economic contexts. Narrative study appears to favour the interpretive approach and then has to cope with difficulties of extending insights beyond the singular situation and the surrendering of any extension of meaning beyond the relative and intersubjective.

The research problems are compounded when the interpretive approach, with its proclaimed egalitarian value of teacher-researcher-in-equal partnership, is understood as a male hegemonic exclusion of women from the production of educational knowledge. Activist research [as opposed to Action research] makes clear the 'binary dualism' between research stances which emphasise coolness, rationality and distance and those which speak to warmth, emotionality and engagement: between those who seek to promote cultural transformation through 'passionate scholarship' not rational coolness. Both lay claim to the value of the personal -professional story while activist research attempts to deal with the tension that occurs with the entwining of the personal, the political and the professional. [4]

Narrative studies bring contact with that icon of post-Renaissance-Reformation intellectual concern, the nature and meaning of Self. Autobiography and life-histories drive us to reflect on our understanding of this phenomenon and especially how it is perceived and constructed through the intersection of the personal biography with history, economics and social structures. Post-modernists view the Self as a hangover from modernism to be replaced by the Self as subjectivity through language, which allows the person to be 'read' by alternative discourse practices. Identity exists only in a context produced by the available discourses of that context: a linguistically generated sense of identity. [5]

There are more examples that could be supplied of the nodal significance of narrative studies which bring educators and educational researchers into direct contact with mainstream intellectual concerns. Hence the quotation from Seymour Chatman.

1

1. Introduction

a] Can 'anecdotes' really count as research ! ?

It seems not unreasonable at the start of a paper on narrative studies with a short story. The idea to write a piece about teacher narratives and research had three starting impulses. One was, having introduced a strong biographic element into Masters courses, I was having to deal with students' felt needs to be reassured that what they were producing was a valid academic as well as professional activity. The way this was often presented was, 'Will it count?', 'It's only my experiences so is it really worth anything?' 'Don't I need more references?', 'It can't be called research, can it?' and 'It's not valid or reliable **you** can't **generalize** from **my** life and **my** experiences.' [6]

The second nudge was when a colleagues asked about the *Teachers' Stories of Life and Work Conference* and I responded with something about narrative and its potential for understanding teachers and teaching. She reacted (there was a nano-second in which the body language preceded the linguistic response)[7] with a dismissive shrug of the shoulders which foreshadowed the reply 'I see it's just anecdotes' and away she went. [8] Both contexts seemed to suggest that there was a certain or perhaps, considerable gulf, between those who accepted, valued and were comfortable within the culture of journals, diaries, life histories and those for whom the enterprise carried low or even zero credibility.

The third galvanic prod was also from a colleagues who was quite forthright on the impossibility, as he saw it, of deriving anything of permanent value, enduring meaning or signification from teachers' stories. Given the very nature of narrative, the *interpretive act must be based upon material contrived for a specific audience and for a specific purpose*, that for each audience alternative tales would be forthcoming -which placed the research enterprise squarely within the problematics of post-modernist debate in which all texts are of equal value and hence none are of any value. The post-Enlightenment agenda of truth, logic and rationality debunked in favour of endless relativities and arid [and ultimately redundant] textual exegesis.[9]

The cumulative effect of these was to produce an unsettled state. Reflecting upon these ideas made me consider my susceptibility to the charms of narrative work. Among its seductions are the privileged *entre* into another's life; the sense of being *trusted* with sensitive material produced in contexts of a degree of vulnerability; the feeling of *vicarious participation* in the unfolding drama of pre-service teachers going through a rite of passage; the all-too-human satisfaction of being *audience to narrative*, [being told a good story], the pleasurable satisfaction of a rapidly growing collections of journals and diaries for analysis and, mentioned by a number of researchers and personally experience by me, *emerging into new, deeper and more rewarding relationships with teachers and pre-service teachers* [10] [11]

b] is it *research* ?

This phase drew to an end with an attempt to challenge myself with some questions. These included

a] is the collection, interpretation and publication of teachers' narratives *research*?

b] if it is, what kind of research is it?

c] are its practices defensible?

d] what is it doing to and for those who participate?

e] what is the moral intention of the enterprise?

f] what kind of contribution is it making to educational research as a discipline?

Armed with an epigram from Ervine Goffman -

'I assume a loose speculative approach to a fundamental area of conduct is better than a rigorous blindness to it'

- I began to consider some of these questions.

In particular I decided to focus upon a] whether studies of teacher narratives deserved a better status than that of a 'shaming label'[12] b] what were the limitations of the narrative approach c] which research paradigm[s] would be appropriate and d] was validation possible ?

c] a note on terminology

The proto-typical relationship in teacher narrative studies is that of the originator of the account - the *narrator*- whose experiences are made available to an *interpreter* - one who considers and reflects on the narrator's text and usually interacts with him/her and who offers questions, probes and alternative perceptions within a collaborative relationship.

At this stage the account is *dynamic* with respect to content, form and 'final' interpretation. The publication of interpreted accounts produces *frozen text*. This version becomes available to *over-readers* who [usually] only have access to the published version. [13]

2. Narrative-more than a shaming label

Since a key construct is 'narrative' it would be appropriate to consider some of the central aspects of that special mode of human communication. [14]

a] narrative as generative construct

Narrative seems to have the status of a cross-disciplinary focus; its boundaries are fluid, spreading over into written literature, orally transmitted cultural heritage, to psychology, sociology, law, economics, medicine and education. [15] It is not only a generative construct it has a universal presence yet having an extensive range of forms and functions. The universality of story making, telling and listening is such that it has been credited with being a *fundamental process of the human mind*.[16] For Bruner, narrative is a form of thought of equal validity and importance to that which contributes to logical or inductive arguments; it is an 'irreducible' method of construing reality. [17] The age at which the very youngest members of a cultures' linguistic community begin to rehearse and master particular familial and community forms of narrative encourages the categorization of this mind-process function as a developmental event almost as spectacular as the emergence of language itself: a deep structure of meta-narrative. [18] Alternatively, it has been claimed that narrative is a kind of infantile stage along the way to abstract [i.e. 'higher'] forms of discourse and as such is an *inferior* form. Yet all kinds of the most abstruse and abstract of discourses resorts to narrative and even anecdote as devices for inserting communicative energy into de-personalized accounts. Rosen [1985;12] suggests a dialectic:

> 'Within any non-narrative discourse there is the ghost of a story and within any narrative there stalks the ghost of non-narrative discourse' [19]

Narrative theory can detect subtle structures showing how there exists universal features and forms in narratives across considerable distances of time, place and culture. It greatest contribution has been its exploration of the high peaks of canonical fiction while its negative effect has been to project stories into the realm of higher and rarified obfuscation. With more humdrum lives and biographies its touch is less certain. [20] The universality of narrative suggests that it serves some profound psychological and social needs: a process whereby inchoate and often banal human experience *is given coherence and meaning*. From this perspective narrative is not primarily an aesthetic mode but an integral act of mind which not only *reflects* how we live but *shapes* how we live: to survive we need to make up stories even if they are told to no one but ourselves. It is a strategy for giving meaning to what we perceive, what we do and, fundamentally, who we are.

b] selection and emphasis: the imperative of story

But in order to provide meaning we must appreciate that all narrators [including self-story tellers] engage in *choice, selection and emphasis* and beyond the 'distortions' which flow from selection there is the imperative of *fiction* as the demand of the cultural expectation for story, forces us to construct beginning, middles and ends, to consider cause and effect, motivations and desires. This order of discipline does not have just one 'rule' but sets rules, modes of discourse, which follow the deep structural features of society with generational gaps, gender boundaries, as well as those relating to ethnicity, class and sub-culture.[21] [22] In this respect our 'ways of telling' are like implanted soft-ware ready to default experiences into pre-programmed narratives forms: we are told by our stories - our degree of agency as narrators is always less than we might be prepared to acknowledge. [23] In contemporary society many of the narrative function have been surrendered to professional story tellers. Television, newspapers and novels seem full of interesting and vibrant stories. These appear to devalue our

unworthy personal tales and those purveyed have their significations predigested. It takes an effort to detach the proffered meanings from those we might construct unaided. [24] [25]

Narratives function in a triangulations of story, story-teller and audience. Narrative research is about the relationship between the producers of the text and their intentionality, the text itself and readers' interpretation [which cannot be finite]. Just as there is this triangulation of text, intentionality and interpretation in respect of *external stories* so it exists for *internal stories* -the ones's we tell ourselves as we engage in blatant forms of retrospective or anticipatory teleology endlessly dramatizing our own perspective; delusional special pleading.[26]

c] story telling as 'drive'

The urge to tell our stories is a powerful one having the psychological status of a biological drive. To the idea that narrative is an act of mind we add a motivational factor: the domain of 'needs'. The out- pouring that can engulf researchers when teachers are legitimised as story tellers informs how great is this drive. Listening to and encouraging teachers to story tell is more then catering to individual needs. At a time when the only story that seems to be around is that which comes from central government it is more vital than ever that others in education have the opportunity to tell their stories. I support the point made by Goodson [1991] that teacher narrative studies represent an important attempt to generate a counter-culture resisting the current tendency to

> 'return teachers to the shadows. A counter-culture based upon a research mode...that takes teachers seriously and seeks to sponsor the teacher's voice.' [Goodson, I. 1991, p 4][27]

3. The Chicago Symposium

The University of Chicago Symposium on '*Narrative: the Illusions of Sequence*' [1979] is held to be a landmark event in the development of critical approaches to the study of narrative. It is intriguing to note that at the Symposium 'Education' was not represented although sociolinguistics, literature, semiotics, structuralism and media studies were. Speakers agreed that it was a commonplace of modern relativism to assert that for any event there are *'multiple versions'* and any claim or conviction that one particular version contained 'the truth or the whole truth' must be regarded as deeply suspect. This position has interesting implications for narrative studies of teachers and teaching which aspires to communicating something 'truthful' or at least trustworthy enough to be worth passing on. [28]

a] stories and sense -making

The Chicago Symposium was inclined to see the central problem of narrative as one of determining or estimating the *value* of narrative *as a mode of making sense of reality*. That 'reality' could be dimensional - extending from a factual reality [based on actual events] through to the imaginative, symbolic and moral realities of fiction.

b] the consolations of coherence

Stories may be opiates in which the narrative provides an illusory understanding of the world by the *imperative of coherence*. These 'orderly consolations' of narrative can be disrupted [as Kermode] suggests by regarding it as containing hidden messages, or 'secrets', which are uncovered by 'over-readers'...members of a special academic class with time to pry into secrets'. [29] Other contributors stressed the conservative and ritualistic functions as a bringer of order and an aide-memoir to maintain links with the past. Against this view, our stories may be ways of confronting uncertainty and unpredictability, as foreshadowing fables of disintegration and indeterminacy, through which individuals and cultures examine the possibilities of crisis or change.

c] telling stories to self and others

Among the symposium's contributions most germane to the study of teachers' stories is that of Schafer's 'Narration in the psychoanalytic dialogue' where that discipline is re-defined as an *interpretive* one [not a positive science] based on an awareness of normative narratives of individual development

and in helping people to understand and to have the possibility of re-telling their stories in new ways.[30] He argued that

> '... there is no single, necessary, definitive account of a life-history and psychopathology, of biological and social influences upon personality...'[Schafer, 1980, p30]

The data and methods of psychoanalysis are

> 'inseparable from the investigators *precritical* and interrelated assumptions about the origins, coherence, totality and intelligibility of personal action.'[Schafer, 1980, p30] [31]

These together with certain 'commonsensical' life events [eg the vicissitudes of child development] provide a frame for doctor-patient story telling. This story telling is a continuous affair and at one level appears like a straight forward narrative action - 'This is what I did- this is what happened- this is what it felt like'.In reality most stories compound imagination and fact. [32] However in telling such stories we are, of course, listening closely to ourselves telling the story. We may even feel that we are overhearing the story we are telling as a novel reconstruction which has the vividness of a new tale. ['I didn't know until now what that event/ relationship meant to me until I told you my story.']

> '... there is a self to tell something to, a someone else serving as audience who is oneself or one's Self...we are [also] forever telling stories about others...other people are constructed in the telling...an existence one tells. Consequently, telling 'others' about 'ourselves' is doubly narrative.' [Schafer, 1980 p35]

Many of the stories we tell of ourselves and others are usually located in the distant past - 'My schooldays were miserable', 'My mother is a saint'- but this history is a present telling. The history of the self is changed as we change: we modify the questions to which they are the answers. Personal development occurs as the result of trying to ask and answer different questions. Analogously to therapy the interpretation of teacher narratives [of the self or others] offers the possibility of changing the questions that one can ask of one's life tale. The interpreter is offering [sensitively?] another way of telling the story through asking different questions. In this process of re-telling some features of the story are emphasised, new connections are made, and other causal connections seem plausible.

d] visioning another's world

Traditionally psychoanalysis accepted a notion of a world reality outside the patient and an equally powerful inner [psychic] world reality. Reality testing meant attempting to understand what was real, true and objective as opposed to the unreal, false and 'subjective' in both the inner and outer world. The *interpretive* approach offers an alternative way of proceeding which attempts to construct a proffered vision of the subject in the world. The essence of the interpretive stance is a temporal cycle working backward from the present to help the construction of a defined, refined, corrected and coherent past. Such present telling of the past constitutes the beginnings of a new future. In the telling of these stories the starting point is the *psychoanalysts'* attempt to 'narrate' [which may be by silence or questions] the patients' story and the patients' responses to that attempt.

e] the ur-narrative ?

There was disagreement as to whether beneath the variety of stories that can be told there exists a universal structure: a kind of *ur-narrative*. This can be see most clearly in the innumerable versions of certain folk or fairy stories but I see it as an analog of the lingering belief within those using teachers' stories that there is a bed rock tale which supports the surface geology, morphology and landscape of possible stories. Is there a meta-narrative of teachers' stories

f] told by our stories

The problem of the degree to which we own our stories or are owned by them is one of central importance in understanding the meaning of narratives. As far back as Sapir in the debate about the impersonality of culture, he argued for the potency of individuals with the capacity to think, feel, desire and act while acknowledging the inescapable puissance of the history, geography and culture which provides the content and the techniques [language] with which to think, feel, desire and act. [33]

The 'anthropology of experience' has to negotiate the intersection of the individual with his/her culture and the culture with the individual. No interpretation can claim coherence if it does not attempt to understand this conjunction. As Popkewitz [1988] has it

> '...to understand where individuality begins, one must first understand the ways in which history and social structures impinge upon our choices.'

Autobiography may claim the accidental and serendipitous only to find these need recasting as an issue involving the relationships between economic, cultural and political patterns.[34]

g] the ecology of story telling

In reviewing the text of the Chicago Symposium, I am sympathetically inclined to the views of Barbara Herrnstein Smith which gave a special prominence within narrative theory, to the *circumstantial and psychological variables under which stories come to be recounted*. The publication of the interpretations of others' narratives should, according to Smith, satisfy as minimal the following requirements,

1. The circumstantial variables which led to the production of the narrative. [particular context, material setting -cultural, social as well as physical
2. The particular listeners or readers addressed
3. The relation of the narrator to them
4. The narrator's motives for telling
5. The imposed or implicit narrative conventions which applied to the telling of the story
6. The reaction of the audience/reader which influenced the content and manner of telling. [35]

With such information the 'over-reader' can approach the text with an awareness of the 'circumstantial' variables. More attention to these would seem a desirable attribute of published research in this field.

4 Key Features of Narrative Research

a] the invisible watcher of persons

Social science research like other 'sciences' sought , to discover, and understand the nature and of and magnitude of error inherent in the process of observation and measurement: the process of 'putting Nature to the rack to compel it to answer our questions' as Bacon puts it. [36] The contribution of post-Newtonian physics was to illuminate the significance of reckoning with where the observer stood in a relativistic universe. Among the social sciences it was anthropology which drew attention to the problems caused by naturalistic studies of 'man-watching' with the pretence was that the observer was somehow invisible and hence not reacted to. Attempts to rid social science methodologies of the contamination of the personal and subjective took some time before it was discovered that researchers were 'feeding multiply man-contaminated data into their Truth-Machines [Weston La Barre, 1967; viii]. The 'paint yourself into a corner' position was the dubious epistemology of research conducted by people studying people while trying as hard as possible to be non-human.

b] all social science is autobiography

Psycho-analysis revealed as an enduring insight that people do not have absolute dominion over their own interior territory of rationality. The unsettling notion that what passes for rationality, truth and objectivity is contested ground, means a serious challenge to person-watching, person-understanding or person-interpretation as a closed or determinate system. Its corollary is that knowing others requires a degree of self-knowledge before the distorting effects on observation *and* interpretation can be detected and monitored. [37]

Given this stance we may say with La Barre that

> 'all ethnography, indeed all social science, *as presently practised* '[my emphasis] is a special case of autobiography'.

We recognize that within interpretive disciplines, wise men and women. are 'wise' within the confines of their cultural biographies and individual identities: the possibility of identifying and confirming the transcendental is problematic if not illusory.

c] the end of reliability and validity

Narrative study [including Life Histories] placed within the qualitative research paradigm has been inclined, at least in some quarters, to reject the notions or reliability and validity. Petra Monro [1991], working within the feminist canon wrote

> 'Validity was not a word in my vocabulary, nor in my methodological framework. [I] agree that "to ask questions about validity in qualitative research was to ask the wrong question." [Munro, 1991, p1][38]

She suggests that as an epistemological concept validity assumes some absolute, fixed and verifiable truth but these 'safe' ideas about truth have been challenged by alternative facts, standards, experiences and perspectives which recognises that *truths* are partial, contested, intersubjective and illusive. For her, Life History research is about 'understanding how the research process illuminates our ways of knowing'.

Part of the feminist perspective, which she adopts, changes the target from 'truth' finding, to making explicit the relational dimension of field-work in which collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, with the researcher placed reflexively within it, allows for the possibility of shared transformative outcomes. [39]

d] relationships between narrator and interpreter

Munro's account, in which she attempts to make transparent her own research dilemmas, is particularly helpful in respect of a key construct in teacher narrative research - the relationship between the narrator and the interpreter. She writes of her chagrin that her life-history respondents did not appear to want to be 'full participants in the research process' and were uncomfortable with the researcher sharing her life with them. Other issues were

i] *motivation* - why did these people volunteer?
ii] *collaboration or ownership* - feeling anxious as the respondents took initiatives
iii] *intellectual perspectives* - fear of imposing one's own analytic perspectives by 'getting too close'
iv] *ethics* -in interviewing other people, getting alternative perspectives on the respondent's life, did this violate the collaborative research relationship?
and v] *the relationship and the report* -in the report it is traditional to leave out an account of the relationship, its dynamics and role, yet without it a vital element is missing.

Aptekar [1990] discusses the dilemma of the ethnographer charged with producing an objective text from an intimate, participatory experience. Ethographers can chose to deny their own existence by producing a 'disembodied ethnography' or to use a 'self-indulgent ethnography' with the ethongrapher at the center of the text. A third appraoch is one with the the subject's and ethnographer's voices clearly separated. Among the difficulties noted is of the ethnographer proclaiming to record the truth while not being able to tell the 'whole truth'. The ethnographer's choice of topic, information collection procedures and categorization strategies are all selective devices. [40]There is also an issue regarding respondents accepting their own and the interpreters 'final' - pre-publication- version. Is there a sense in which 'agreement' is problematic for emancipatory or empowering expectations.?

Munro also begins to explicate a dilemma for the feminist [and other researchers] in wanting to go beyond the intersubjective towards some kind of macro narrative which at times can look curiously like the generalizing claims from positivist research paradigms. Among the tell-tales is the use of the word 'data' as though through crediting personal narrative with the cachet of positivist methods ensures a more

objective respectability for the subjective: perhaps a sign that the intellectual claims for qualitative approaches may be asserted but not wholly believed.

Willinsky [1989] draws attention to the potentially problematic relationship between teacher and researcher and that the collaborative relationship ['a metaphor for an ideal ethical situation in which neither voice is submerged by the Other', quoted by Munro] can, in practice, be strained by the desire of the interpreter to see patterns, images and rituals in an attempt to construct narrative unity [the urge to fiction] and by a paradox,

> 'collaboration entails a suppression or at least a masking of that very individuality...the research project works hard to recover in teacher and researcher...individuality may be ploughed under in labouring for a collaboration of voices and the production of shared meanings' [Willinksky, 1989,p 255]

Here we begin to consider one of the crucial features of narrative research. I put this in the form of two questions

i] what counts as evidence or 'data'?
ii] what counts as interpretation?

Both can be approached from the phenomenon of countertransference

e] the interpreters' pre-critical assumptions

Devereux [1967] uses the psychoanalytic concept of *countertransference* which, in essence, is *how the observer of human data reacts as a person and a human being to his [sic] observations*

This suggests that the fundamental datum of social science is what happens within the observer.[41]

In the past considerable efforts were made to remove the person from the research report by expunging all contaminating tell-tales of the personal and human reaction to social phenomenon. In interpreting 'de-humanised accounts' countertransference effects become apparent as unconscious, unintended 'spillage - a certain 'take this for granted' stance' or 'it is obvious that...' . In those accounts where the human-centredness of the interpreter is a central feature of the process, the events happening within the observer are made as available as possible. [42] La Barre offers the compelling image of the aware social scientist living in a glass-house and willing to throw stones at it and self. Without this rigorous self-examination [as well as offering one's self for scrutiny by others] the possibility of an

> 'authentic social science' is limited to 'charismatic posturing and feckless changes in 'methodology'-rationalized folklore about man'. [La Barre, 1967;x]

The scientific study of Man [43] is held up by the anxiety caused by the overlap between subject and object in which there is partial communication at the conscious level and complete at the unconscious level. It is the felt tension between these that produces anxiety and countertransference reactions. This leads to distortions of perceptions and interpretations of data.Since the existence of the observer, his observational activities and his anxieties produces distortions [which are technically and logically impossible to eliminate] any effective behaviourial science must treat such distortions and disturbances as the most significant and characteristic data of behaviourial research.

> 'The subjectivity of all observations is the royal road to authentic rather than fictitious objectivity which is what is possible rather than what should be.' [p.xx]

The reaction to this is not to attempt to reduced subjectivity by placing more and more screens between us and our subjects [tests, interviewing techniques, computer codes]: the best observer is not a machine. We need to address the distinctive difficulties of our approach and cannot ignore the interaction between subject and object and should concentrate upon the difficulties. [44]

> 'It indicates that the subject most capable of manifesting scientifically exploitable behaviour is the observer himself.' [p.xix]

It is the study of the *observer* that gives us access to the essence of the observational situation. In this respect the reflexive account by Munro may stand as an example of the observer-participant showing behaviour [thought] which exploits the situation.

Accordingly, the 'data' of behaviourial science derives from

a] the behaviour of the subject

b] the disturbances produced by the existence and behaviour of the observer

c] the behaviour of the observer- his/her anxieties, defensive manoeuvres, research strategies and 'decisions' i.e. the attribution of meanings to his/her observations.

This third area is the one on which we have the most unreliable and incomplete evidence.

f] ' "Two-Crows denies this"; 'The transcript of the interview was an accurate record.'

It is now axiomatic that our affective/relationship involvement with the phenomenon we study prevents objectivity and,I would claim, places difficulties in the way of non-exploitative collaborative work. In anthropology it was not until 1949 that Sapir identified the scientific importance of Dorsey's celebrated sentence 'Two-Crows denies this.' which is one of the earliest indications of the possibility of divergence between narrators and interpreters and that such divergences are anthropologically significant. Thus it becomes possible to see an observers' interpretations of his/her subjects [and their subsequent reports or accounts] as an analog to a TAT or Rorschach card and as such, open to over-interpretations. This is equally true of narrators' objections as well as agreements: both require reflection.

The professional researcher has a number of defensive mechanisms to reduce anxiety produced by his/her data for example, -by naive and cultural relativism. Among the factors which influence the observer-interpreter are *social background*, [this is not supposed to be a factors where positivist *scientists* are concerned since their methodology absolves them of cultural and social disturbances], *ethnic background*, *occupational status*, *choice of career* , *gender* [45] *age*, *character structure* are all identified and exemplified by Devereux as sites of countertransference effects. [46]

g] the exploitation of the disturbance

It does not make sense to deny that the observed-interpreted is also observing and interpreting: there is a reciprocity of observation and reflection. According to Devereux, *it is scientifically productive to ascribe awareness to the 'subject' and to permit him to make statements while permitting the 'observer-interpreter' to make statements about statements*. The 'subject' is permitted to make statements and display operant as well as respondent behaviour including his awareness of the observer. The observer-interpreter is permitted to make statements only about the subjects' statements and in other contexts to make statements about his statements. *Only his statements about his statements are treated as information relevant to the particular observational context in which he analyses his own scientific behaviour.*

Thus, what we should regard as 'data' in narrative studies is not what the teacher said or wrote but what the interpreter made of it.

5. The post-modernism and the privileged discourse

It may seem that this account of the nature of social/behaviourial research fits neatly into post-modernism with its preoccupation with relativism, subjectivity, discourses, surface, and playfulness. But among its contributions is the capacity to deny the academic researcher an absolute privileged position or, put another way, it alerts us to the idea that academics do have relatively powerful positions from which to promote certain kinds of discourse and to marginalise other forms: control of discourses as sources of power. Carr [1991] suggests that the application of post-modernist ideas to educational research produces an argument which states that educational research is possible because who do it and write about it, share a common 'language' which includes methods, rules of evidence and agreed ways of communicating findings. Discourses about educational research are 'meta-discourses, that is discourse about discourse'. Examples of such meta-discourses would included the Tylerian rationale for curriculum research or Stenhouse's empowerment of teachers as action researchers; the meta-discourse of countertransference is Freudianism. Such meta-discourses are, for Carr,

'...stories we tell ourselves that what we do is worthwhile...that our findings...are rational, valid, true, etc.'[Carr, 1991, p 1]

However, post-modernism would have us believe that there are no secure meta-discourses in which we can have confidence. We are spoken by our particular discourses which limits we what we may or may not say. The choice of a particular research method is not a neutral intellectual decision but emerges from a distinctive historical-cultural setting with a particular set of power relationships. The other implication of this perspective is that the products of research are themselves serving particular interests which must include the marginalisation of other interests.[47] The thrust of this argument is to challenge narrative research and researchers, to identify why the interest in narrative studies emerged, when it did, its status as a research-discourse, the interests it serves, [those it marginalises] and the extent to which it challenge uncritical social reproduction.

a] The frozen text

In narrative-interpretive research we may describe the emerging story as having a dynamic as it is negotiated and shared between narrator and interpreter. I see this process as one in which the pre-text has innumerable possibilities: its form and context is as yet only vaguely discernable. During this process, negotiation, discussion, disagreement, changes of emphasis and recapitulation and clarification are all part of the narrative-interpretive-textual dynamic. However when the dynamic text appears in print, it ceases to be dynamic and becomes frozen: awaiting the scrutiny of the 'over-readers'.

I think it would be fair to claim that in a great many cases, in frozen texts, the dominant voice is that of the interpreter. As 'over-readers' of the interpreters account we do not [or rarely] have access to the whole narrative [understandably so]. What we have, again generalizing, are excerpts, examples, quotations, illustrations etc which support the particular interpretation being offered. As over-readers we are crippled: limited to responding to the illustrative material allowed us and to a critique of the interpretation offered. Being aware of this problem the freezer-of-text-interpreter, often attempts to make clear that the illustrative examples and the interpretation have been cleared by the respondents as honest and accurate accounts of what went on. Others go further and make accessible to researchers the whole narrative on which the frozen text is based. But as noted above the agreed account emerges fron a relationship with conscious and unconscious forces at work.

For example, Roger Openshaw's account of 'Schooling in the 40's and 50's: an oral history' shows some of the strains in the change from dynamic to frozen text. The project was an attempt to find a voice for New Zealand educators who had made a contribution to the development of social studies. [48] The initial core of the sample was identified as 'innovators' and these added the names others to form a net work. Those interviewed knew their experiences would be published and had the opportunity to check and correct transcripts. The editor notes the problems of editing interviews and supports his actions by reference to 'length and clarity'

> 'Unfinished sentences and "false starts" have generally been deleted. I have taken the liberty of correcting grammar and in one or two instances, substituting a word where it seemed obvious what was intended...The original recordings and transcripts are still in existence and these may be checked against the final version....I have been concerned that the participants should be allowed the opportunity to speak for themselves...rather than to simply interweave the comments to support my own conclusions. This is not to say that there is no place for the latter approach...the project has given rise to a number of reports...of an analytical nature...'
> [Openshaw, R. 1991, p ii]

This seems to me to be careful scholarship in which a set of limits or warnings are given to the over-reader [about the nature of the sample, collection of evidence] with the final safe-guard of an archive.

Similarly Nias [1989] faces the issues with this plea

> 'For the most part I have set myself an arbitrary limit of three or four illustrative comments for any given point and have pared these down to the essentials. The reader is asked to accept that the evidence I have presented has been painstakingly sifted from nearly

150 lengthy interviews, 22 diaries and several letters, and that I have omitted much more data than I have included.' [Nias, J. 1989, p 9] [49]

In other words 'Trust me'.

In many published accounts of teachers and their stories the over-reader has to struggle with this notion of trustworthiness. In the last analysis is it the interpreter who has the privileged discourse and the task of the over-reader is to detect abuse of privilege.

b] formal and informal relationships between narrators and interpreters

This has been touched upon in a previous section. Munro [1991] acknowledges the researcher can start with an assumption about his/her relationship with the respondent which can be discomforted in practice. The respondent may not wish for a relationship in which the researchers subjectivity is part of the interactional nexus. As noted in the section on countertransference the interpreter cannot escape from the status-affective relationship imposed upon him/her by the respondent. Therefore, the interpreter not only brings to the interpretive task his/her own bundle of 'pre-critical assumptions' but carries, often unconsciously, the additional burden of an imposed role and relationship through which the respondent seeks to manipulate the interactions [and the narratives] in the service of personal-psychological or ideological needs.

Two features of the relationship need particular, if brief, mentions. The first is where there exists a *formal* relationship between respondent and interpreter. Examples of this formality would be pre-service teachers and their supervisors or post-graduate students and tutors. This creates something of a difficulty if relationships premised upon differentials of power are presented as collaborative and democratic. As an over-reader I need to feel the texture of the formal relationship in a reported study are provided for me. As an instance, Johnston [1990] in a study of trainee teachers on a social studies programme writes about 'volunteers' for participation in her investigation and clearly knowledge of the status relationship between the researcher and the volunteers and the part, if any, played by assessment or evaluation would assist in appraising this work.[50]

The second area is that of *friendship*. As noted earlier, involvement with narrative studies can facilitate relationships between teachers and researchers of a particularly deep kind. There are examples in the literature where the relationship reaches the point where the interpreter can write of it as 'friendship'. Bullough, Knowles and Crow [1991] preface their account of pre-service experience by recording that

> 'We feel especially fortunate in that the six teachers whose stories are reported here, who are now friends, were so willing to talk openly about their work and to let us into their lives' Bullogh, Knowles and Crow [1991, Preface [no page number] [51]

The social construct of 'friend' contains within it not only notions of interpersonal intimacy but also some expectations of trust, openness, confidential confessions and faithfulness which if violated damages friendships.[52] As Grumet [1987] has pointed out the closer the friendship the riskier it is to tell the friend certain stories about oneself.[53] If friends agree that a story may be published are there limits which friendships impose on what may be told? Tripp [1992] suggests a number of important questions for teacher narrative research: they are,

a] 'who gets to say what to whom about whom and why?'[54]
b] 'what can be learned from by others from the personal lives of teachers?'[55]
c] 'to what extent should the personal be made public?'

'In view of the history of the damage done to teachers by educational researchers, these are pressing questions which should be formally answered.' [Tripp, 1992,15] [56]

6. Teacher narratives and research:beyond singularities

Tripp's cautionary words need to be heeded. It reminds us that such work has an ethical dimension and that academics are potentially capable of exploitation:over-powering strategies through empowerment tactics. If we believe that teacher narrative studies contribute positively to their personal as well

as professional development, that research in this area can make a contribution to educational studies we need to find ways which makes a contribution to knowledge without exploitation.

In attempting to make such a contribution, in my view, we need to develop ways of critically approaching texts and attempting to see to what extent it may be possible to say something beyond the noting of singularities. Michael Bassey [1991] defines educational research as

> 'Research entails systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge.' [Bassey, M. 1991,37][57]

This can be compared with Munro's [1991] advocacy of research as an engagement with matters which are partial, contested, intersubjective and illusive. Bassey argues that research is the *search* for knowledge: an attempt to show something that was not known before. He draws a distinction between the search for a generalization and the search for a singularity. Researchers engaged with singular situations rely on the over-readers to *relate* the research report to their own situation; in generalizing research the methods and results have overt implications for the population from which the research sample is drawn. Those attracted to the study of the singular will often find the interpretive paradigm more congenial than the positivist one.

> 'To the interpretive researcher the purpose of research is to describe and interpret the phenomena of the world in attempts to get shared meanings with others....it is a search for perspectives and theoretical insights. It may offer possibilities but no certainties as to what may be the outcomes of future events.' [M.Bassey, 1991, 42]

The selection of an appropriate research paradigm which would enable the interpretive study of the singular to be a 'contribution to knowledge'.[58]

7. The case-study as immature science or essential paradigm?

One of the characteristics of many teacher narrative studies is of a focus upon an individual or small cohort investigated in a intensive manner. [There are notable exceptions to this generalization.] This suggests that of the available research models the 'case-study' with an interpretive framework would seem an ideal type. Bromley [1986;21] pointed to the undeserved low status of the case-study as a research paradigm and its use in education was

> '...typically...[for]...the evaluation of enterprises such as curriculum development, cross-cultural comparisons...mixed ability teaching...educational innovation'.[59]

At that time case-studies were generally held to be a suitable method where the content and context were novel or particularly complex and as such were probes, yielding material for subsequent more rigorous approaches: a cautious toe in the water before the real plunge. Hamilton [1980][60] found case-studies, compared with surveys, were regarded as a form of 'immature science'.[p.78]. Case-studies were analyses of single settings or occurrences with no presumption that 'different instances can be thrown together to form a homogeneous aggregate' [p79] The rationale for case-study approaches was that since social phenomena are 'person-made' the methods of natural science need not logically apply and that educational phenomena should determine the methods employed in their illumination. In contrasting case-study with survey methods, Hamilton saw them as projecting different images of the world [artifactual versus natural], having different notions about human behaviour [active behaviour versus passive observation] and with differing ideas about scientific practice -interpretation versus generalization. [p90]

This robust defence of the case-study is a useful starting point but it did not address the issue of how to evaluate case-studies and asserted the idea that extensions beyond the singular was problematic. Bromley[1986] provided a positive affirmation of the case-study as the opposite of 'immature science' and rated the approach as one of the most powerful in the social sciences. The case-study approach [or situational -analysis] combines notions of making a contribution to science with a recognition of the 'textural' qualities of persons and context. The person in context and events are described, analyzed, interpreted and evaluated within a conceptual and methodological framework. Psychology had been slow and reluctant to develop a scientifically acceptable framework for the case-study both as means

towards a greater understanding of specific persons-in-context and as a valid milieu for serious research. Part of the reasons for the slowness of the recognition of the case-study was that in psychology and psychiatry it often dealt with 'private' matters and publication was attended with special difficulties which normally do not apply to objective data. Other reasons included a failure to develop general principles for the conduct of the case-study. Where they had been used was at the level of 'human interest ' stories to enliven an otherwise drab report.

While it may be acceptable in positive science to say 'Science is not concerned with the individual case' in the social sciences, lacking the grand theoretical structures of the natural sciences, by the nature of its material, [persons in contexts] must be concerned with the individual in specific contexts. It would seem to me a proposition worth holding that one of the more important dimension of a person is the context in which they are sited. Put another way, that what can be generalized about them is conditioned by contextual parameters: but this not to deny the possibility of the 'advancement of knowledge' beyond the singular.

If life histories are series of events viewed in relation to one another, the case-study [person-in-context-teacher-in-context] is an intensive view of an episode - as in professional preparation. For Bromley, *the value of the case-study is proportional to the revelation of facts and relationships which provide a plausible explanation of the particular while adding to the case-law of that general area of interest.*

The epistemological question is, in what ways can person-context studies claim to have knowledge of particular persons. What knowledge do we have of this person and how was that knowledge obtained? Bromley argues that the standards which apply to the case-study are not those of the methods of positive science but what he calls the 'quasi-judicial method' which can be rigorously applied to the analysis and interpretation of evidence. Case-study to become case-law requires the evidence and interpretation to be considered as though it were given in a law court. Courts are given evidence, witness present their stories, their claims and counter claims are cross -examined and the jury comes to a view on the evidence provided as to whether the case is proven on not. This is a time-honoured procedure for verifying claims and offers a structure within which to evaluate differing stories. [61]

A case-study achieves legitimacy to the extent that the researcher reports truthfully on the person's life and circumstances. This requires accuracy in matters of detail and the relevance or importance of any fact, data or observation is established by rational argument not special pleading. Bromley advocates setting a clear aim for the case-study and sees the study of the person leading to a 'close, fairly long and possibly difficult relationship.'[62] This requires a researcher who is capable of creating trust and handling personal problems as they arise. The lengthy nature of the relationship not only allows for trust and intimacy but allows the time for corroboration of testimony and to check internal consistency. Among his rules for the conduct of a case-study is that the person must be seen in an *ecological context* ['The objects, persons and events in his or her physical, social and symbolic environment'. [p 25] since the proper focus is not on the person but the person in context.

In his analogue of the courtroom Bromley offers the following comparison of the social studies investigator with a court of law.

CASE-STUDY REQUIREMENTS	TRIAL
Investigator reports truthfully	Testimony under oath
The case-study sets out some explicit aims	Formal charges are laid
The investigator makes an assessment of how far the aims have been achieved	The evidence is laid before the court and examined
The investigator is properly trained	Those giving evidence have a qualification to appear in court
The account of person-events is placed within its ecological setting	Extenuating circumstances
The account is delivered in plain English	The interpretation is based on the behaviour of the reasonable person

Its procedures are

1. problems and issues stated clearly
2. background context evidence collected
3. prima facie explanations offered
4. which lead to searching for other evidence
5. the collected evidence is scrutinized for admissibility, relevance and the credibility and competence of evidential sources examined.
6. sources of evidence as well as evidence is scrutinized
7. critical inquiry into the internal coherence, logic and network of argument
8. most likely and plausible account selected
9. implications considered
10. A report is prepared which interprets the person in context while adding to the case-law by virtue of abstract and general principles employed in explanations and these can be applied to other and similar cases, with minor adjustments.

This approach is introduced as an example of possibility of working towards a contribution to knowledge through the interpretive case-study. We can enter the universe of teacher narrative studies using the criteria of the quasi-judicial approach to satisfy ourselves as to the trustworthiness of the data and those conclusions drawn from it. That is, the touchstone is not 'truth' but 'trust'.

8. The notion of trustworthiness

Research in the field of teacher narrative studies is sited within a dialectic tension between theory, methods and 'results' and as branch of the interpretive approach it acknowledges a processual dynamic between observation and interpretation in a hermeneutical spiral. However this acknowledgement does not of itself provide a solution to what counts as evidence or insight at the point where the processual dynamic is frozen into text. Put more directly we need to know when published teacher-narrative research becomes trustworthy.

> 'I [reformulate] validation as the social construction of knowledge....The key issue becomes whether the relevant community of scientists evaluates report findings as sufficiently trustworthy to rely on *for their own work*'[my italics]
>
> [Mishler, 1990, p417] [63]

As we learn more about the actual [as opposed to fictive accounts] ways in which positive science is conducted as a human activity characterized by uncertainty, conflicts, power-plays and 'ad hoc-ery' validation becomes not simply a technical exercise but a problem at the heart of the enterprise. Mishler argues that no general rules can be provided to give an over-all level of validity in respect of particular studies or domains and that ultimately all attempts at securing validation end up as judgemental or interpretive. Construct validation becomes *the* problem of validation putting meaning and interpretation at the heart of the matter. He presents the view that in place of validation we should consider the 'trustworthiness' of observations reported, interpretations offered and conclusions drawn.

The operational definition of trustworthy research is that we trust it enough *to act upon it.*[64] The more members of a research community act as though the research results were valid the greater the likelihood that such research acquires a taken-for-granted 'truth'- it has high persuadability; like a good story told in court the jury of peers reports the verdict, 'we believe this testimony'.

This notion of 'trust' *as a basis for action* shifts [importantly] the emphasis from an objective, neutral, dispassionate 'truth' to a social context of praxis and discourses. Evidential definitions and criteria for trust do not emerge from technical methods but from "a network of assumptions embedded in a tradition" [p421] and neither from attempting to erect a new set of prescriptive procedural rules for use within and/

or for the validation of interpretive approaches. Kuhn's [1962/1970] [65] "views of knowledge" embedded in "shared exemplars" as well as "modes of knowing" brings out the impossibility of replication [the usual prescriptive algorithmic road to validation] even with exemplary reporting on research methods. [He cites the common practice of scientists visiting each other's laboratories to see how an experiment was 'actually' carried out as opposed to how it was reported.] [66]

Within social science there are groups of researchers sharing common assumptions, perspectives and approaches which acquire within those domains the cachet of trustworthiness. [Carr's 'Stories we tell ourselves that what we do is worth while'] Mishler looks at life history and personal identity, oral narratives, and Proustian narrative strategies as foci for an exploration of the extent to which published research in these narrative areas can be regarded as trustworthy - 'as a basis for action'.

Mishler's analytic approach is to

a] focus upon a piece of interpretive discourse

b] take its text as basic datum

c] reconceptualising it as an instance of a more abstract and general 'type'

d] provide methods of characterising and coding textual elements

f] specifying the relationships between them

g] interpreting the 'meaning' of the structure within a theoretical framework [67]

Among the issues he examined was how some researchers cope with voluminous and variable language samples [life history accounts], using, [initially, deductively derived] limiting constructs [eg power, intimacy, motives, themes, ego development] and converting these into coding categories. The complex and diffuse original data is transformed [reduced] into quantitative measures. However the novel 'objects' produced by transformation means the exclusion from the analysis those parts of the narrative which lie outside the coding categories [eg excluding structural and sequential features] which for interpretive researchers are essential parts of any provisional interpretation.

Even within its own research culture, the text coding activity examined by Mishler, was not readily convertible into a replicative process '...since the coding procedure could not be transferred directly to another research context'. The researchers broadened and narrowed, opportunistically, their coding definitions as the exigencies of text demanded. These are quite normal practices but throw into question attempts to use standard replication techniques to demonstrate validity. There are real problems about the ***stability*** of coded categories for individuals engaging with their own texts let alone the issues surrounding ***reproducibility*** -the arrival of shared and agreed understandings.

Alternative procedures are to use inductively derived constructs not to create testable hypotheses but as exploratory devices within a task shared by both respondent and interpreter.[68] Mishler takes it for granted that the account produced in an interview is a 'reconstruction of the past, shaped by the context of its telling.' [p427] The respondent's tale is the basic 'text' for analysis and interpretation. For Mishler there is no problem of 'distortion' of the present account as opposed to some authentic, objective reality which, if recoverable, could serve as a validation of the current account. The absence of an objective correspondence is not a weakness

> '...but rather the hallmark of interpretive research in which the key problem is understanding how individuals interpret events and experiences, rather than assessing whether their interpretations correspond or mirror the researchers' interpretive construct of "objective" reality.' [p427]

For Mishler the touchstone of validity in interpretive work is the extent to which the interpretation makes sense to the respondent. [69] We have see [above] that interpretation is vulnerable to the effects of countertransference and the 'acceptability' of the interpretation is mediate by the relationship between the respondent and the researcher. For Mishler the art of interpretation is identifying text samples as representative of patterns found in the data set. But Mishler fails to see in this a similar problem to those he found in the codifying reductionist; we, as recipients of his patterns can know nothing of those elements which lie outside the 'patterns' he identified in the data set. What we can do is to respond to the interpretation he offers in the light of the examples we are permitted to examine unless we have

access to the full text. He does recognize that other researchers could come to the same data set and arrive at different patterns and he asks these questions of his own study

> 'What are the warrants for my claims? Could other investigators make a reasonable judgement of their accuracy? Would they be able to determine how my findings and interpretations were "produced" and, on that basis, decide whether they were trustworthy enough to be relied upon for their own work? I believe these questions have affirmative answers'.

THE VISIBILITY OF THE WORK
FULL AVAILABILITY OF ALL PRIMARY TEXTS
TRANSPARENCY OF TEXT TRANSFORMATION
CLEAR LINKAGES BETWEEN DATA, FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION
DIALECTIC OF THEORY AND INTERPRETATION
VALIDATION BY USE IN ACTION BY OTHERS

Criteria for trustworthiness

He protects himself from attack by suggesting that his methods do not validate his interpretations [which must rely on the construction of a discourse though which a study comes to be socially defined as trustworthy]. Trustworthiness begins to be possible when the published account contains the whole text. In a short 'story' told by a child can have all the words used can be supplied, although this may leave out important non-verbal information on rate of delivery, tone, affective emphases an so on. Complete texts are also available when the 'texts' are diaries and journals or published biographies allowing others to construct analytic categories and to offer other interpretations.

For Mishler the task in comparatively novel areas of research is "the collection of relevant exemplars" and to count as exemplary they must display the following

a] the primary text is available

b] the specification of analytic categories/distinctions is in terms of discernable features in the text

c] the theoretical interpretations focuses on structures/relationships between the categories [not variables]

The central theoretical aim is to describe, analyze and interpret at pattern of relationships within a set of conceptually defined analytic categories. That is, the analysis shifts to a more abstract level as theory and analysis engage in a mutual dialectic and with sufficient information we can make decisions as to whether the research is sufficiently trustworthy for action.

9. Creating a defensible stance

To return to the original questions I feel confidence in asserting the significance of narrative as 'an act of mind': that it has intrinsic values. The interpretation and over-reading of narrative brings with it significant riches of thickness, texture and specificity. These are balanced against the problems of interpretation and over-reading. Case-studies of individual teachers or small groups are capable of yielding insights and understandings which offer the possibility of more than the singular. Using approaches such as trustworthiness will allow the identification of insights and understandings which enrich the perceptions and professional development of those [still a minuscule proportion] teachers who have been involved in narrative research programmes and offer illumination to fellow practitioners and educators.

There are unresolved concerns over the issue of relationships between researchers and teachers. As teacher educators we have some responsibility for the psychological and social health of teachers and

an even more serious concern for the learning, adjustment and socialization of pupils. Narrative studies challenge presumptions about the nature of evidence and knowledge. As a research activity it is still in debate as to whether or not it is socially and pedagogically capable of being transformative.

Can we show clearly and unambiguously that our intensive pre-occupation with a relatively small number of teachers is worth the effort?. To what extent are narrative studies intellectual past-times for privileged over-readers? For me the moral key, at this time, is the intention to find an opportunity for the silent and the silenced.

In narrative studies a countervailing discourse is generated producing and inventing an alternative vocabulary, which in may ways is agonistic to current modes of educational discourse which seeks to portray education as a commodity, where the main forms of evaluation are by measurement and value is restricted to quantification. But I have larger hopes than of providing a voice: the objectives must surely embrace transformative and emancipatory intentions. But in order to do that educational researchers will need to clarify their pedagogical and social agendas.

> 'As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible: accordingly, we must seek its constituent elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed- even in part- the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world'[70]

Notes

[1] D.Jean Clandinin [1989] 'Developing rhythm in teaching: the narrative study of a beginning teacher's personal practical knowledge of classrooms' *Curriculum Inquiry* 19,2, 121-141.

[2] Ivor F. Goodson and Rob Walker [1991] *Biography, Identity and Schooling*. London, The Falmer Press.

[3] Ross Chambers [1984] *Story and Situation: narrative seduction and the power of fiction*. Theory and History of Literature, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

[4] See Gaby Weiner [1989] 'Professional Self-knowledge versus social justice:a critical analysis of the teacher-researcher movement.' *British Educational Research Journal* 15,1, 41-51; Lynne Chisholm [1990] 'Action Research: some methodological and political considerations.' *British Educational Research Journal*, 16, 3, 249-257. and 'A response to the feminist writings of Weiner and Chisholm' *Research Intelligence*. Spring 1992 29-30.

[5] Morwenna Griffiths [1991] 'Change and Self'. Paper presented at the BERA Conference, Nottingham, 1991 1-19 pp

[6] Thomas D. [1991] 'The place of personal narrative in professional development: a personal narrative of professional change'. Paper delivered at the 'Conceptualizing Reflection in Teacher Development' Conference. University of Bath 20-22 March

[7] In particle physics a nano second can be a life-time.

[8] Harold Rosen [1985] in *Stories and Meanings* National Association for the Teaching of English NATE, Sheffield, refers to the status of anecdote as a 'shaming label'.

[9] Christopher Norris [1992] *Uncritical theory: post-modernism, intellectuals and the Gulf War*. London, Lawrence and Wishart.

[10] Thomas D. [1991] 'Teachers as unexplored persons: pre-service teachers' narratives, diaries and field-notes'. Paper presented at the BERA Conference, Nottingham 1991

[11] Opening up uncomfortable speculations about socially inept academics seeking the solace of surrogate relationships

[12] I am using the term 'narrative' or 'teacher narrative' as a generic label for a variety of products - 'texts' of various kinds which have as their common feature the recounting of experience whether very recent, as in reflections on a lesson just completed or remembrances of events long past.

[13] The 'frozen text' notion came from reading Bryan Magee's *Men of Ideas* [1978, BBC Publications] at first blush appears to be a transcript of fifteen television interviews with philosophers. These interviews were based on prepared notes but were unrehearsed and unscripted. Three or four sessions prior to the interview were given over to planning what to say - including what to leave out- but leaving a good deal of freedom of expression during the interview. Until the editing of the interviews for televisual transmission the text-tape is dynamic. The translation ['revision'] of the text-tape into print was undertaken by the contributors who were encouraged to

'improve the transcripts to any degree they wished' and some went to the length of 'recasting their entire contribution'. At this point the dynamic ceases and the text become frozen. It would be interesting to compare the video recordings with the print text: both are frozen though in different media.

[14] Perhaps in crepuscular arboreal sanctuaries the higher primates regale their troop or family with adventures and even exchange dream stories.

[15] As an illustration of the penetration of narrative into other disciplines see, Jackson, B. S. [1988] *Law, Fact and Narrative Coherence*. Roby, Merseyside, Deborah Charles Publications.

[16] Barbara Hardy [1986] 'Towards a poetics of fiction: an approach through narrative.' In 'Novel: a forum on fiction' Fall 1968, Brown University.

[17] Bruner, J. [1983] *Actual minds, possible worlds* Cambridge, Harvard University Press [quoted by Graham, R. J. [1989] 'Autobiography and Education.' *The Journal of Educational Thought* 23, 2, 92-105.]

[18] See Oliver Sacks 'The last hippie' *The New York Review of Books* XXXIX, Number 6, 1992, 51-60 for an account of a case of brain damage which left the patient unable to recall the details a simple story after a brief delay but who could create an alternative story [substituting for a mouse and a lion a giant mouse and a mini-lion]. The capacity *to retail* a story remained: the deep structure was intact.

[19] Rosen, H. [1985] *Stories and Meanings* NATE, Sheffield.

[20] The deadening impact of narrative theory has been described by Simon Schama as '... narrative hobbled by the leaden boots of narrative theory...' S. Schama. *Guardian Weekly*, October 6th 1991, p 22.

[21] see Bruner,J. [1988] 'Life as narrative' *Language Arts* 65, 6, 574- 583 for an interesting example of how, within one family, fathers and sons and mothers and daughters, 'tell' the story of the family in differing ways. The men focus upon a linear account replete with causation while the women's telling is discursive, elliptical, relational and affective. There are also narrative distinctions between the generations.

[22] Deborah Tannen, [1991] *You Just Don't Understand* London, Virago. Tannen documents different conversational styles between men and women, ['Report talk' and 'Rapport talk'] If men talk to claim 'power' and women talk to 'connect' it seems plausible that their story telling would reflect these and other distinctions.

[23] As Bernard Williams once remarked 'One's history as an agent is a web in which anything that is the product of the will is surrounded by and held up and partly formed by things that are not'.

[24] Here I mean not only the canonical stories, the classics of fiction but also all the multifarious ways in which other peoples' stories clamour for our attention. It may seem at times that our primary function is audience and not narrator. Michael Ignatieff has noted the phenomenon of the 3-Minute Culture where television induces a loss of narrative flow; narrative, he pointed out was a mnemonic device assisting with the remembrance of meaning through time. Without such devices we lose the thread attaching us to our past. Television could become that past: remembrance of television programmes past: the cathode ray tube waiting for its Proust.

[25] See Richard Hoggart's 'The mission and the vision' [*The Guardian*, March 4th 1991, p21] on the importance in a democratic society of a critical citizenry able to interpret the stories offered to them by politicians and advertisers.

[26] Autobiography challenges the writer to avoid imposing on the past the order of the present. Retroactively, facts are placed into relationships which were not there when initially experienced. From the present 'facts' are singled out for meaning they may not have had. To this should be added the need to see the life as process for which narrative is the ideal form.

[27] Goodson, I. [1991] 'Studying teachers' lives: problems and possibilities' Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Easter 1991 pp 1-17

[28] Here I wish to ask the question, how great are the risks attendant upon any interpretation based upon one account prepared for a specific readership or relationship ?

[29] Frank Kermode [1980] 'Secrets and Narrative Sequence' *Critical Inquiry* 7,p 83-

[30] Roy Schafer [1980] 'Narrative in the psychoanalytic dialogue' *Critical Inquiry* 1980, 7, 29-.

[31] Analogous to pre-service teachers' personal theories of education, teaching and learning. Interpreters of teacher narratives, bring to their interpretation both overt and concealed pre-critical assumptions. Recent experience with trainee counsellors learning to listen to clients' stories of child abuse indicated they had to be directed away from the danger of the detail of the clients' stories to listen to the story behind the story: which in this instance was often about a sense of guilt in those who had been abused.

[32] Similar issues appear to confront historians. Macaulay suggested that the writing of history is a balancing act between Reason and Imagination. Simon Schama writes of the panic aroused in some historians by the least signs of imagination ['the great intellectual engine'] or what he calls 'playfulness'. 'Above all historians are cautioned and reprimanded: eschew the subjective, the interpretive. The road to truth is the hard and stony way of cumulative empiricism; the holy grail at the trail's end, a chill and limpid objectivity. The *face of the historian should not betray the story teller's animation: it should be the mask of dispassion.* For Schama, the task is to illuminate the human conditions from the witness of memory and '...the truths likely to be yielded...[by narrative and imagination] will always be closer to those disclosed by great novels or poems than the abstract general laws sought by social scientists.

Simon Schama [1991] 'History and the Imagination of our Hearts'. *Guardian Weekly*, Oct 6th 1991 p22-23.

[33] Edward Sapir [1934] 'The emergence of the concept of personality in the study of cultures' *Journal of Social Psychology* 5, 412.

[34] Thomas S. Popkewitz [1988] 'What's in a research project; some thoughts on the intersection of history, social structure and biography.' *Curriculum Inquiry* 18, 4, 379-400.

[35] Smith, Barbara Herrnstein Smith [1980] 'Narrative versions, narrative theories' *Critical Inquiry* 7, 213-

[36] Weston La Barre [1967] The Preface to Devereux, G. *From anxiety to method in the behavioral sciences* Mouton and Co. The Hague.

[37] Morwenna Griffiths [1991] 'Change and the Self' Paper presented at the BERA Conference, Nottingham 1991. 1-29 pp

[38] Munro, Petra [1991] 'Multiple "I's"': Dilemmas of Life History Research.' Paper prepared for American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 3-7 pp 1-21

[39] See Catherine Manthorpe [1990] 'Feminism and Science -toward a human science ?' *Curriculum Inquiry* 20, 1, 113- for a consideration of science and knowledge as an attempt to define what is -*ideological* in science while retaining what is legitimate, valid and useful.

[40] Aptekar, L. [1990] 'The ethnographic dilemma' American Educational Research Association, Boston, [MA] April 15-21, 1990, 35p

[41] La Barre [1967] Preface [ix] notes honourable exceptions to the epistemological predicament such as Levi-Strauss, who have subjected their own reactions to field-work phenomenon. See the overview of Levi-Strauss and his work in *Claude Levi- Strauss; the Bearer of Ashes*. David Pace [1986] Routledge and Kegan Paul.

[42] Technically we may say the countertransference is a reaction to phenomenon which the observer is initially unaware of its origins and alternative meanings though through analysis a degree of awareness is possible.

[43] Usual sexist disclaimer.

[44] See Michael Agar ['The Right Brain Strikes Back' Chapter 11 in Nigel Fielding and Raymond Lee [eds][1991] *Using Computers in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.] for an account of the issues raised by using machine readable categories to analyze interview transcripts. Such categories 'cut' discourse into categorical segments which the computer links together 'topically' leading the researcher '...straight into the right answer to the wrong question' [p 181]

'Computational trends in qualitative research carry a logic that runs like this: Isolate those aspects of ethnographic research that lend themselves to computer assistance and develop software to implement them.....then... conduct an ethnography to maximize fit between the process and the available software. The second step is supported by everything from individual researcher anxiety about systematic results to broader historical pressures for efficient technology...software presupposes a way of seeing the problem and the solution' [p193]

[45] '...each human being was and is perplexed by the fact that another being, congruent in nearly every respect with his (or her) self-model, should, in one respect- sexuality- be so different.' [Devereux, 1967; 178]

[46] '... precisely because he professes to have a self-policing mind, even when he functions as a participant observer, he may fail to realise that his subjects force him into a procrustean bed of an ascribed status, chosen in accordance with their own needs.' [Devereux 1967 p 234]

[47] Wilfred Carr [1991] ' Post-modernism and Educational Research' paper presented at symposium. BERA Conference, Nottingham, 1991.

[48] Openshaw, Roger [1991] [Ed.] *Schooling in the 40's and 50's: an oral history*. Research Resources No.1, Educational Research and Development Centre, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. 123 pp.

[49] Jennifer Nias [1989] *Primary teachers talking: a study of teaching as work*. London, Routledge.

[50] Johnston, M. [1990] 'Teachers' backgrounds and beliefs: influences on learning to teach in the Social Studies.' *Theory and Research in Social Education*, XV111, 3, 207-233.

[51] Bullough, R.V., Knowles, J. Gary and Nedra A. Crow [1991] *Emerging as a Teacher* London, Routledge.

[52] Aptekar [1990] draws attention to the ethnographer's dilemma of being involved in the dual role of 'friend and informant.'

[53] Grumet, M. [1987] 'The politics of personal knowledge' *Curriculum Inquiry*, 17, 3, 319-329.

[54] Nespor and Barylske [1991] draw attention to narrative texts as the creation of a particular kind of representation. As such it involves more than method or epistemology it is a matter of power. 'To represent others is to reduce them and to constitute relations of power that favour the representers [researchers] over the represented'[teachers] p 806.

[55] Butt [1990] in a large scale project involving 75 teachers seems to have good evidence that biographical work is a fundamental form of personal and professional inquiry it appears to achieve even more positive results when undertaken as a collaborative venture where to can facilitate team building, bonding and staff development projects.

[56] Tripp, David H.[1992] 'On Pedagogoautobiographicopraxicologicomethodology: teachers's lives, critical incidents and classroom practice.' *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1992 [in print]

[57] Bassey, M. [1991] 'On the nature of research in education' In three parts *Research Intelligence* British Educational Research Association.

[58] Bassey defines the advancement of knowledge as 'telling someone something they didn't know before'; it may initially belong to the researcher alone but with the 'expectation that the researcher will publish the findings to as wide an audience as may benefit from the new knowledge.' 'Knowledge' is, he writes, understandings about events, things, processes incorporating description, explanation, interpretation, value-orientation as well as knowledge about ways of finding out. 'It includes theory-in-the-literature as well as common sense theories which practitioners have which have not been articulated in writings.'[p37.]

[59] Bromley, D.[1986] *The case-study in psychology and related disciplines* London, Wiley.

[60] In Simons, H. [ed] [1980] *Towards a science of the singular*. CARE, University of East Anglia.

[61] It is instructive to note that in law schools lawyers are trained in narrative studies. Such training gives special emphasis to presenting judge and jury with a coherent story and also how to detect weaknesses in opponents' narratives. It would appear that narrative coherence and plausibility is the aim rather than truth-seeking. This is a weakness in the quasi-judicial method, and, of course, courts can be given unsafe evidence.

[62] However, see in Simons. H. [1980] [ed] *Towards a science of the singular* CARE, University of East Anglia, Occasional Publication No 10, the argument for the case-study as a heuristic device and 'clear aims' is not always the most creative approach.

[63] Mishler, E. G. [1990] 'Validation in Inquiry-Guided Research: the role of exemplars in narrative studies' *Harvard Educational Review*, 60, [4], 414-442

[64] Accepting research as trustworthy enough for action includes a] accepting that replication, at this time, is unnecessary b] theoretical implications are a springboard for theory development and c] findings/interpretation could be a basis for social action.

[65] Kuhn, T. S. [1962/1970] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [2nd ed, enlarged] Chicago, University of Chicago.

[66] See, Henry H. Bauer [1992] *Scientific Literacy and the Myth of the Scientific Method*. Baltimore, University of Illinois Press.

[67] Mishler [1990] describes 'interpretive discourse' as referring to researchers' understandings of texts as representing efforts by speakers/authors themselves to describe and interpret their experiences.'[p. 424]

[68] This does not remove the *nature of the respondent- interpreter relationship* from the zone of problems: calling it a shared task tells us about the interpreters' wishes and even fantasies.

[69] As we have seen the problem of text is not resolved merely by calling upon the respondent to confirm that the text is what he/she meant to say. It ignores the key factors of text being produced within a relationship for a purpose.

[70] Paulo Freire [1972] *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Harmondsworth, Pelican Books. [p 60]

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